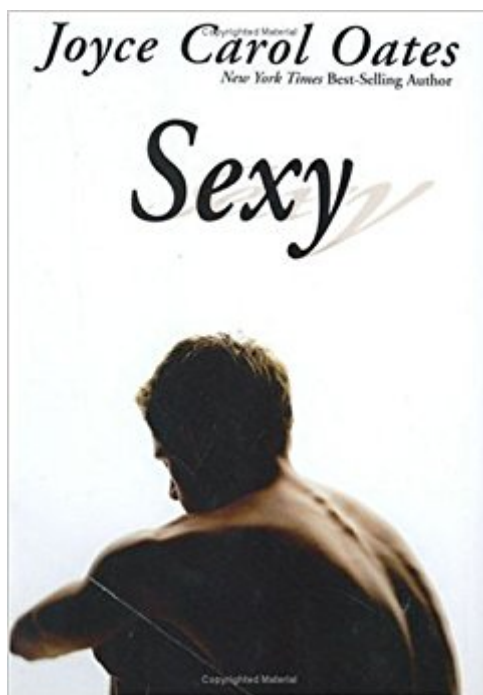


The book was found

# Sexy



## Synopsis

It was in November, a Thursday after swim practice. The thing with Mr. Tracy, Darren's English teacher. The thing was how Darren would think of it, afterward. The thing that was vague and not-named. The thing that hadn't happened, anyway. Darren Flynn has the perfect life -- until that day in November. After that day, after what happened (did it happen?), life is different. Darren is different. Nothing is as it was -- before. His friends, his family, even the people who are supposed to be in charge are no longer who Darren thought they were. Who can he trust, now? This compelling, masterfully written novel by acclaimed author Joyce Carol Oates explores one teenager's search for identity in a complex, deceiving world, and the answers he finds in the most unexpected places.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 272 pages

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Product Dimensions: 5 x 1 x 7.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces

Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 stars 21 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #670,620 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #22 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Sports > Water Sports #609 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Boys & Men #1231 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Being a Teen

## Customer Reviews

Gr. 9-12. Fans of Oates' previous YA books will want to read this book, which, like *Freaky Green Eyes* (2003), is written in fragmented sentences meant to create a conversational effect.

Sixteen-year-old Darren Flynn is a good-looking "guy's guy," a junior on the swim team, but he is uncomfortable with his maturing body and with girls. Darren believes men watch him, too, something that both disgusts and excites him. A seemingly innocent encounter with his English teacher, Mr. Tracy, troubles Darren. There are rumors Tracy is gay, and after the teacher flunks one of Darren's teammates, some boys retaliate, implicating Tracy in child porn. Tracy, who insists he is innocent, appeals to Darren for help. Teens will be drawn into the story, wanting to know if Darren is gay and if he will vouch for his teacher. But Oates loses control of her plot by dividing her attention

among too many issues--sexual orientation (there's even a scene in which Darren has sex with a college girl), personal responsibility, and betrayal--and the ethical debate becomes too muddled to follow. Readers may come away as confused as Darren is by the close of the novel. Cindy Dobrez

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"A compelling story. The characters are well drawn. Sure to be a popular title." -- School Library Journal  
"A deftly written page-turner." -- Kirkus Reviews  
"Fans of Oates's previous YA books will want to read this." -- ALA Booklist (boxed review)  
"Fine young adult literature." -- BookPage  
"Palpable and compelling." -- Horn Book Magazine  
"Raises thought-provoking questions." -- Publishers Weekly (starred review)  
"Raises thought-provoking questions." -- Publishers Weekly (starred review)  
"Touching and believable. An unusually sensitive and sympathetic assessment." -- Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books  
"With terse prose, she draws readers into the awakening consciousness of the teenage mate." -- KLIATT  
"[A] deftly written page-turner." -- Kirkus Reviews

I am always delighted to find that a writer whose works I admire branches out into yet another genre, in this instance children's and young adult literature. Reynolds Price, Ian McEwan and Toni Morrison-- just to name three fantastic writers-- have done it; and now Ms. Oates, who apparently is capable of anything when it comes to writing, has written *SEXY*, the story of Darren Flynn: "Soon as he turned sixteen, put on weight and began to get attention for his looks, things began to turn weird." And weird they do. He becomes visible to both women and men, including his high school English teacher Mr. Tracy. Darren is on the swimming team, is from rural New Hampshire, is very shy-- he has a girl friend who is sort of just his best friend. He is still chaste as the New Hampshire snow when it comes to girls. He faces all the dilemmas of a teenage boy and certainly doesn't always make the better decision. Without giving away the plot of this short work, I refer to his handling of "the thing" with Mr. Tracy as well as his participation in the bashing of a gay kid at the mall. Ms. Oates is ambiguous about the character Darren. Perhaps that is as it should be since heaven knows being sixteen has its own set of problems. It speaks multitudes I believe that this fine writer dedicates this volume "For All The Darrens." This thoughtful book about teenage angst is a great read for adults. I'd love to know how it is received by high school students. I suspect they could relate completely to Darren.

Oates has written a thought provoking young adult book that leads to the questions of personal

responsibility, as well as self identity and acceptance. Darryl Flynn is a beautiful and charismatic young man. He's popular with his peers and a rising athlete in the swim team. One evening after school one of the teachers gives him a ride home, and Darryl's mind races at the idea of what might happen, of what this teacher might be, and what that might mean Darryl is. Told is quick chapters that burst with angst, Oates puts the story in high gear, barreling towards a dramatic event that send shockwaves through the school and Darryl's questioning mind. Oates provides no easy answers, and instead simply presents an honest portrait of a young man in crisis. I'll admit the language in the beginning threw me for a young adult book, however it's not done in an exploitive way, and does add to the realism of the characters.

This book is exquisite and marks another transitional point in Ms. Oates writing style. The book centers around the development of a sexual identity in her protagonist, Darren. Darren is 16 going on 17 in the story, which takes place over about a 1 year time frame. Oates is particularly specific and incisive with her psychological development of the character's sexual identity. In addition, there are several powerful subplots or themes concurrently unfolding in the story. But perhaps the most significant of these is the result of a person being falsely accused of a sexual crime. Despite the fact that this person has passed a lie detector and there is no tangible evidence against him, neither physical nor testimonial; not even enough to show cause to arrest him. Yet this does not stop the entire town from believing precisely the opposite of the truth. In a most profound manner, Joyce illustrates just how the "appearance of impropriety" is just as bad as an actual impropriety. Oates' writing style is particularly fascinating in this book. It is a conflation of all her previous talents, with elements of Barthelme image fragments and D.H. Lawrence style deep psychological introversion; it also combines her prior writing styles with her Rosamund Smith (her pseudonym) style in its page turning readability. The character of this style is very, very different; and leaves the reader to interpret much more than Oates usually does. Yet it is also gripping and charismatic in the manner in which she uses it. This is one of the finest of her novels so far, and completes the transitional writing style, which seems to have been so prevalent, but developmental in her book "Rape: A Love Story." The book is recommended for almost all readers, it is a thriller, a classic and a mystery rolled all into one. The feelings and empathy she displays here are seriously professional. The book is truly a bit magical.

I love JCO, but this book is written for junior-senior high school readers. If you're looking for the author's level of complexities of characters, this is not the book for you.

If you have known anyone like Darren, this story will confirm what mystified you about that person. If you have not come across anyone like Darren, your eyes will be opened in a very real way. Physical beauty can be frightening and confusing to those who are beautiful, presenting its very own set of unique problems often not dealt with in literature or anywhere else for that matter. The writing was superb, the voice true. My first JCO book and not my last.

I bought this for my 15 year old niece and she loved it!!! Oates writes fantastic books for teens!!!

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